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18 March, 1871.

WOMAN'S

Right to the Ballot.

BY JAMES H. FAIRCHILD,
President of Oberlin College.

OBERLIN:
GEO. H. FAIRCHILD, PUBLISHER.
1870.

Soc 5045.1

1871, March 18.
Gift of
Wendell Phillips Garrison,
of New York.
(H. U. 1861.)

Fairbanks, Benedict & Co., Printers, Electrotypers and Binders,
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NOTE.

The following views on the question of Woman Suffrage were first published as a series of papers in "The Advance." In response to a frequently expressed desire, they are now presented in this more convenient form.

WOMAN'S RIGHT TO THE BALLOT.

The question of woman's place and work in civil society and in social life, is pressed upon us with an energy and a confidence which threaten to compel action without time for deliberate consideration. There are doubtless those on both sides of the question who have given to it time and earnest thought, but the majority, even of the thinkers of the land, cannot be supposed to have done any thorough work upon it. To many the discussion is distasteful. It seems to them to bring to the test of reason and of logic questions which belong rather to the subtler instincts of the human soul; and for man to maintain his hereditary prerogative by any show of argument, or for woman to dispute it, appears to them like a domestic quarrel. Thus many of our best men and women excuse themselves from all responsibility in the movement. In ordinary circumstances we might leave the case to be settled thus by the constitutional instincts of mankind. But the time is past for such security. Already, on our western frontier, women gather to the ballot box, sit on juries and act as magistrates. In several State legislatures the question has already come up for action, sometimes with decisive indications of a willingness to test it by experiment. There is a prospect that we shall find the question

determined by the action of political forces, before the great body of the people are aware that it is before us at all.

INFLUENCES FAVORING A HASTY DECISION.—We are in the midst of a revolutionary era. The National Constitution, which had remained untouched for many years, has, since the rebellion and the war, received three most radical amendments by the action of Congress and of the States. There has been a vast movement in the direction of democratic ideas and arrangements, and the momentum has not yet subsided. A little engineering skill only is required to plant the "Sixteenth Amendment" on the top of this wave of reform and bring it over the reefs and the shallows. Within the last few years four millions of slaves have been made freemen, and, within the last few days, have been proclaimed voters. The nation is in a magnanimous frame of mind, and it seems a most ungenerous deed to refuse to our loved and honored mothers, sisters, wives and daughters, the boon which has been granted to millions of the ignorant and the despised. The impulse of progress and reform will scarcely be stayed until it has drifted us beyond these old lines of propriety and order. If the great reform wave could have subsided before we were called to stand face to face with the new movement, then we should have hastened slowly, but such considerate advancement is now hardly possible. Some of the old reformers, flushed with the confidence which springs from victory, are pressing on to new conquests. Others, ashamed to

be regarded as obstructionists or conservatives, are following on with some misgivings.

In ordinary times the vast conservative forces of the country might be relied on to check the movement. The great body of the people are naturally indisposed to change, and time and force are required to overcome the inertia. But conservatism is "demoralized." Those who were overwhelmed by the rapidity of the anti-slavery movement, are not disposed to be caught asleep again, and so they are inclined to stand ready for the onset. They had not the discernment to recognize a true reform; they are likely to be bewildered by a doubtful one. In the cities, as I am told, there is a class of business men who always fail to understand a movement in real estate. To them it is the excitement of an hour, which they are too knowing to meddle with. As days and weeks pass by, and their neighbors make fortunes in which they have no share, they become uneasy, and just at the turn of the tide they step forward to shoulder the losses which their more discerning neighbors are ready to lay off. This fact in human nature will explain the attitude, upon this question, of some of the most conservative men.

The relations of the two great political parties of the country tend to precipitate action upon this subject. The leaders of a party instinctively grasp at every new idea that promises popularity, and the success of the party is supposed to depend upon the early adoption of these popular ideas. The politicians have many misgivings upon the move-

ment now proposed, but neither of the parties can afford to let the other monopolize the interest which the adoption of the "Woman's cause" will secure. One of these parties is essentially without a platform, and a new idea, about which they could rally, would be hailed as a godsend. Party jealousy, on both sides, will watch the rising interest; and the danger is that we shall find these new views incorporated into our political platforms before we have had time to consider their bearing.

TIME NEEDED.—What we need in the case is not the pressure of party machinery, but a calm and earnest examination of the question, in its bearings upon the social life of the people. The question must at length be brought into the political arena, if it is to be pressed to a formal decision; but it has no proper place there until it has been brought into our churches, our homes, and our hearts, for careful and prayerful thought. It is a question of social and domestic life, rather than of politics; and the new adjustments that it calls for must be made first in the neighborhood, and at the fireside. Nor is it a matter of immediate and temporary interest merely. The proposed change will mark an era, and the distant future will take its form from the present action. We are to have no trial of the new ideas. There is no room for experiment. The step once taken could never be reversed, unless some great convulsion should obliterate our social institutions, and reduce society to its simplest elements. It indicates more zeal than true wisdom to press the subject upon the attention of legislatures

and of Congress, with a view to immediate political action. For a change so radical we can afford all the time requisite to its thorough comprehension.

POLITICAL MAXIMS MISAPPLIED.—An additional tendency to a hasty decision may result from certain hereditary political maxims and formulas, which the history of our government has furnished. Our sacred "Declaration" speaks of natural equality among men; of certain natural, inalienable rights; of the just origin of government in the consent of the governed; of the injustice of taxation without consent, or representation. These maxims are very generally regarded *as applying to the individual citizen*,—a superficial view, indeed, but one which is very taking to the democratic, American feeling. The advocate of woman's suffrage seems to have little more to do in the way of logic, before an average American assembly, than to apply these convenient formulas. For these principles our fathers bled, and to hesitate in their swift acceptance and application is treason to the "memories of '76"! The presumption in favor of the claim is admitted at once, and he who stands up against the logical inference does it under the pressure of the Declaration of Independence and all its heroic associations!

I do not propose to speak now of the natural limitation of these principles or to show the fallacy of this sweeping application of them, of which the fathers of the republic never dreamed. I refer to them merely to indicate the fact that the new movement has a powerful ally in our popular demo-

cratic ideas, and that there is a predisposition to accept its logic. The argument from natural, inalienable rights has a taking force to the popular ear and the popular heart. No genuine American can hear it with perfect self-possession.

THE PRESSURE OF GALLANTRY.—In addition to these influences, and mightier than any of them, is the disposition on the part of men to grant to women whatever they ask. It seems ungallant and unchivalrous to stand in the way of any movement which they may choose to make. If the women of this country ask the ballot they are sure to have it. The race of men has never been born, that, living under the refinements of a Christian civilization, could refuse such a request. I doubt whether savages could do it. There is danger that the pressing demand of the few will be mistaken for the decision of the many, and that the ballot will be granted *before* it is asked. The question is to be decided by men, and they will be in haste to clear themselves of any suspicion of ungallantry.

With such extrinsic advantages as these, the proposed reform enters upon its career, with nothing in the form of a disadvantage to counterbalance except the world-wide prejudice against the change in woman's position. Ten years ago this opposition, or general inertia—for it is rather negative than positive—would have proved a formidable obstacle; but the changes of the last ten years in our country have put us in the mood to expect and welcome other changes. The old is looked upon

almost with suspicion—the new with favor. This prejudice has almost lost its power.

RELATIONS OF THE SEXES—"SUBJECTION OF WOMEN."—As to the idea that men are jealous for their prerogative of voting—are afraid of losing their power by sharing the ballot with women, I have no faith in it whatever. There is no such greediness of power over women, unless as an exceptional experience of a very weak man, and no such fear of losing that power. That men as a mass would withhold the ballot from woman for the purpose of keeping her in a subject condition, is utterly improbable. They might stupidly accept her subjection as her normal state, and deride the idea of an aspiration for better things. Such obtuseness is both human and masculine, but that there is a general male conspiracy, either conscious or unconscious, to keep women in subjection, is either a woman's fancy or a philosopher's dream. Whatever relation has existed between the sexes in ages past, men and women alike have been parties in the arrangement. Men and women have conspired to it since the days of Eden. Of a special conspiracy among men there is not the slightest trace. The "subjection of women," which is supposed to appear in legislation, is but the expression in statute of relations and conditions which men and women had agreed upon ages before. The law has simply expressed the existing fact, it has not produced the fact. These relations have involved countless imperfections and monstrous blunders, aggravated by human wickedness and weakness;

but these are the blunders and the crimes of humanity at large, and not the special prerogative of men as a sex. Men have stupidities and sins enough to answer for, without shouldering the whole of this enormous burden. Even gallantry should not be pressed so far. It is safe to say that in the re-adjustment of these relations, men will accept whatever women will agree upon.

Both Sexes to Decide the Matter.—Yet the question is not one which belongs to women alone. We have a common humanity—a united destiny; and neither man nor woman can sunder what God hath joined together. In their social relations neither men nor women can comprehend themselves, until they comprehend each other. They must each interpret their own aspirations and wants in the light of the aspirations and wants of the other. Woman's ideal of man—her estimate of what he ought to be and can be, is quite as likely to be correct and elevating as man's estimate and ideal of himself. Indeed he is quite sure to be at fault until his ideal has been shaped by woman's thought. On the other hand it is equally true that man's ideal of woman is as likely to be correct as her own. An important factor of the problem what woman ought to be and do, is man's apprehension of what he needs her to be and do. Man's ideal of "woman's sphere," which is wont to be rejected with abundant scorn, is an essential element in the determination of that sphere; and when she has adjusted herself and her life to the world as it seems from her own standpoint, if she has failed to meet

man's essential ideal, her work must go for nought. She has failed to comprehend the situation. Her life-plan might serve for some other world, not for this. True, she is a moral being, a child of the great Father, and owes her service and her life to him; but men are God's children too, and men and women are sent into God's world to live together. The children of a family owe duties to each other as well as to their parents. The social problem involves two unknown quantities, man's and woman's nature, man's and woman's work, and neither of these can be obtained without the other. Neither man nor woman alone has the key to the solution. Not that we are to expect to find at last any discrepancy in the handiwork of God. These distinct ideals of character and life on the one side and on the other, will be found at length to correspond. Woman's final estimate of her proper aim and work must be the same as man's complete ideal, but neither of these can be wrought out and perfected in thought without the other. The question then is one in which men and women have a common interest, and in the discussion of which they have a common right; and whichever scorns the other's light, will be sure to walk in darkness.

THE REAL BASIS OF RIGHTS.—The question is one which respects *means* and not *ends*—the *way* of doing, not the thing to be done. The highest happiness and well-being of woman and her widest influence upon human welfare, is what all honest men desire and will labor to secure. Woman has an unquestionable right to all the work she can do

and to all the good she can enjoy, in harmony with the good of the whole. She has a right to the most complete preparation for her work which the world can afford her, and to every facility which will aid in the accomplishment of that work. On these points there is no room for question. All doubt pertains to the ways and means. The ballot is not valuable in itself, but only for its uses—the good it brings to the one who wields it and the good it accomplishes for others. Will the ballot in woman's hand be a means of good to herself or to others? Some may object to this as not the primary question,—that the true question is, has woman a *right* to the ballot? and this question, it is claimed, is entirely independent of bearings or results. It must be decided on the general ground of right without reference to consequences. Women have a right to the ballot, and "let justice be done though the heavens fall." We are graciously assured that the heavens will not fall, but this assurance is gratuitous, and not essential to the argument. The independent and absolute right of woman to the ballot is sometimes claimed on the ground that she is a human being, and the right to vote is natural and inalienable to man; at other times on the ground that she is a subject of government, and as "all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed" she must have a vote; again on the ground that she is taxed to sustain the government, and not having a vote she is taxed without representation. It would not be difficult to meet each of these forms of the argument sepa-

rately, but this would divert us to a discussion of the true nature and basis of government. It is sufficient to say that all rights are based on wants. Beings without wants have no rights. A tree has no susceptibility of good—no want, and therefore no right. Nothing is due the tree on its own account. A brute is capable of good and therefore has rights. You are bound to respect his sentient nature. But the right is limited to the want; beyond this there is no right. The rights of man rest upon the same basis. He has a right to the supply of all his real wants, and beyond this, natural right has no meaning and no force. We determine the rights of men by ascertaining what is necessary to their welfare, and to claim as a right anything not necessary to this is preposterous. If the ballot is necessary to woman's welfare—her happiness or her usefulness, she has a right to it. If not, the right has no foundation. It it is not best that women should vote, all interests being taken into account, then it is not right she should vote.

But here the old objection arises, can it be *right* that she should be governed without her consent, and taxed without representation? I answer, in the only perfectly just government that exists, the government of God, consent is never asked. Obedience is required. In the next least questionable government, that of the family, the children are governed without their consent. The less they consent, the more they must be governed. In the great majority of human governments, there is no ballot and no consent. Yet these governments, under the cir-

cumstances, are legitimate, and resistance to them would be wrong. In our own government the ballot is given to men above a certain age, but their consent to be governed is not asked. They may reject the ballot or vote against the government; yet they are governed all the same. That is a singular *consent* which admits no power of refusal. The truth is, *the maxim has no application to the individual man,* and the framers of the Declaration never intended such an application. The maxim applies to the nation as a whole, affirms its right to determine for itself its form of government, because only such a government can be successful. Beyond this the maxim is utterly invalid.

The business of voting is a governmental function, like the holding of public office, and can only be claimed as a right when it is best for all concerned. "But to be taxed without representation is certainly oppressive. The blood of the Revolution cries from the ground against it." Yet our government goes on taxing minors and resident foreigners, and no one complains. Taxation and the right of voting do not go together. Taxation and protection are the true correlatives. When the government fails to protect the citizen, in his essential interests, then it has no right to tax him. But it may be claimed that the privilege of voting is an essential interest, and the payment of the tax ought to secure this interest. No, the mere voting itself is a burden, not an interest, and is desired only as a means of securing real interests. As long as the citizen is essentially protected in life, liberty, and

property, under the government, so long he is a proper subject of taxation; and those who decline to pay taxes on the ground that they cannot vote, are merely asking their neighbors to pay for benefits which they themselves enjoy. It was the taxation of one nation by another, too remote to understand and provide for the interests of the subject nation, against which our fathers fought. They never applied the principle to the individual enjoying the benefits of the government. It has no such application.

THE REAL QUESTION.—There is no such thing as a natural, inalienable right to the ballot. Those have the right to it whose use of it will, on the whole, be profitable to themselves and to mankind. If the vote of every tenth man would be better for society than the vote of all, then the nine would have no right to vote. Will the ballot be best for woman, and, through her, for society at large? This is the simple, practical question,—a question which is not settled by the application of any *a priori*, rational principle or direct statement of revelation. It must be determined by a reference to probable tendencies and results. It is a question of judgment, and there is room for difference of judgment.

The ballot cannot be denied to woman on the ground that she has not the intelligence and discernment to use it well. Many women unquestionably have such intelligence, and there is scarcely room for doubt that women as a body would vote as wisely as men. This is not much to say in their

behalf. Woman's qualification for the ballot on the score of intelligence must be conceded at once, but it is by no means certain that all should vote who have sufficient intelligence. There are other conditions to be fulfilled.

LEADING ARGUMENTS ANSWERED.—On the ground of long-established custom, and prevalent public sentiment, the presumption in the argument is against the proposed change in the suffrage. This the leaders of the movement admit, and have cheerfully accepted the burden of proof. Let us look at their leading reasons:

1. Woman needs the ballot for her own protection, as truly as any class of society. Her interests will not be cared for in politics, in legislation, and in the administration of justice, unless she is there to look after them herself. Men are greatly blind to her nature and her wants, and cannot make wise laws without her help. They are selfish, too, and will not deal fairly with woman, because they love power and are reluctant to surrender their advantages. The proof of this is in the unequal statutes which disgrace the legislation of Christendom, constructed apparently for the very purpose of placing woman in subjection, and keeping her there. These laws pertain to the rights of property, the possession of children, and to divorce. It is claimed that the ballot is more necessary to woman for her own protection than to any other class of society, because men might understand men, and might legislate wisely for them, but wo-

men they cannot understand, and must continually blunder in legislating for them.

This reasoning seems good, and yet it is not wholly convincing. It is true that women may be called a class of society, but the reasoning which would apply to any body of the people, such as colored men or foreigners, does not apply to them. Women belong to every class of society, the rich and the poor, white and colored, native and foreign. They do not stand apart as a separate portion of the people, liable to be overlooked. By the side of every man there stands a woman, to remind him of her being and her necessities. He goes from her presence to the polls, or to the halls of legislation; he comes back to her when the day's work is done. If this is not the very seat of power, where is it? Women have free and constant access to all the voters, the legislators and the judges of the land, a privilege which lobbyists and struggling politicians seek in vain. Is it probable that with such opportunities women will greatly suffer for want of representation or political influence and power? No representation can possibly be more complete than this.

I know that this view is contemptuously rejected, but the fact remains in spite of the contempt. It is true that many women are unmarried, and sustain no such intimate relations with men. But they all contribute to the common sentiment which governs men; they all have sisters or friends who are married, and thus they have access to "the powers that be." It is true, too, that men often fail to represent

the wants and the will of the women that surround them. So those for whom we vote, and especially those for whom we do not vote, by whom we are still represented, often fail to express our views. Such liabilities always exist in the most perfect system of government. That woman has not a fair opportunity to get her wants and wishes attended to, is utterly incredible. Equally incredible is it that men are not in general disposed to legislate for the welfare of women. There are multitudes of men destitute of principle, and in their domestic relations crabbed, unreasonable, sensual and cruel, but the great body of men in civilized countries give up their lives to toil for their wives and children, and would not willingly do them any deliberate harm. They are certainly disposed to legislate for the interests of women.

But, it is said, women's wants are peculiar and men cannot understand them, however well disposed. This is possibly true, in reference to many of the deeper and more personal tendencies and experiences. But these lie wholly out of the sphere of legislation. The interests, whether of men or women, which are affected by legislation, are the obvious and outward wants of human nature, those easy to express and to understand. Our profounder experiences lie as much out of the range of human legislation as the heavens above us, or the depths beneath. Legislation is a clumsy instrumentality, and is as much out of place among these finer movements of the human soul, as a blacksmith with his sledge and anvil attempting to improve

the nice mechanism of a watch. Neither men nor women can succeed in such a work. The few rough interests which legislation can reach are within the range of ordinary masculine apprehension, enlightened by woman's intuition and expression.

But what about trial by jury? Ought not a woman to be tried by a jury of her peers—of women like herself? Can stupid men understand her case, so as to render a just verdict? Here we have the same delusion again. Those points of human conduct which the law touches are simple and plain. Crime is of the same nature both in men and women, and ordinary common sense is all that is required to meet the responsibility of a juror. If we are to press the idea of a jury of peers to such an extreme, then a boy must be tried by a jury of boys, a girl by a jury of girls, and so on through all conditions of life. This is an extravagance of individualism which transcends all reason.

But the idea that men cannot understand women, even in the distinctive features of their nature, is not well founded. It is the womanly nature that is attractive to men—that element which characterizes woman, which makes her the counterpart of man. Is it what he understands, or what he does not understand, that constitutes the charm? Mystery may sometimes present attractions, but the utterly incomprehensible ceases to interest. Is the woman of the world's literature entirely a myth? Can it be that our great poets, dramatists and novelists have utterly failed to apprehend and express the thought and life of woman? This is a very

recent idea, and probably as unsubstantial as many others.

Oppressive Laws—Erroneous Views.—But, it is said, all this reasoning does not avail, for the facts do not sustain it. There stand the odious laws, the work of man, an irresistible proof of the poet's sweeping charge, that

> Man, to man so oft unjust,
> Is always so to woman.

Woman can expect no help from legislation until her hand assists in giving it the final form.

I have nothing to say in apology for unjust laws, whatever they may be. A full examination would probably show that there is an exaggerated view of the inequality of the laws so far as concerns legislation in this country; and that some of those commonly supposed to be unjust to women, were really intended for her protection and relief. The laws in reference to the settlement of estates upon the death of the husband, were framed to protect the interests of women and children, and for one case where they operate injuriously there are ten where they work beneficently. A law obliterating all distinctions between the husband and the wife in reference to pecuniary rights and obligations, would prove more burdensome to women than the most odious law now upon our statute books. It would render many an estate insolvent upon the husband's death, which under our present laws is made to afford a competence to his dependent family. If the widow were compelled to accept at once the responsibilities of her deceased husband, the

estate would in multitudes of cases be merely the prey of creditors. But if she receives all his rights in regard to the estate, she must accept his responsibilities too. The law is more merciful, and holds the creditors at bay for a year, or until time can be afforded to examine and adjust all claims. But for this provision many a widow would be hopelessly overwhelmed in the very hour of her bereavement.

But the laws, such as they are, are the product of our social state, rather than the social state the product of the laws. Society was before the laws, and the laws are but an expression of the relations which men and women have arranged among themselves. They are not properly the work of men, but of men and women jointly, because the antecedent relations out of which the laws have sprung are the work of men and women,—a part of that social conspiracy which has resulted in what is stigmatized as the "subjection of woman;" and in that original conspiracy, women had a vote.

How to Correct Abuses.—Let women decide that these laws are wrong, and show what would be better, and the laws will be changed, just as speedily and effectively as if men should so decide. Much has been done during the last few years in improving these laws, and all that is required today is to show the wrong, and it will be forthwith expunged. A tithe of the effort required to secure the ballot to women would set the laws right, and doubtless this will be effected long before women vote. The work for which they seem to need the vote, will be accomplished without it; indeed, the

head and front of this offending, robbing woman of the ballot, it is expected to correct without the aid of the ballot in woman's hand. It is even thought by some of the leaders that for women to vote upon the question would hinder rather than help the movement. A lady correspondent of the *Woman's Journal* writes from Minnesota: "If the men alone were to vote on this question next fall, I believe we could carry it, but I am more than half afraid that the women will defeat it." Women, in their hearts, believe that men will set the laws right, when either men or women alone, or both together can ascertain what is wrong. Woman does not need the ballot for protection against unequal legislation.

2. Work, Wages and Legislation.—It is sometimes claimed that woman needs the ballot to secure to herself better wages and better work. The fact that her wages are so much less than man's is supposed to be the result of her not voting. What relief the ballot could afford in this respect we are not distinctly told. The relation of cause and effect seems to be assumed without evidence. The matter of work and wages is commonly supposed to lie outside the sphere of legislation. All that can be properly asked is that no restriction be placed upon the laborer,—that he be allowed an open market for his work. Do the advocates of the ballot for woman propose to set aside this established principle, and vote themselves work and pay? This they do not claim, and yet somehow they are persuaded that the higher wages of men

are due to the fact that men vote and women do not. The only hope of increasing woman's wages is in multiplying the occupations which are open to her, thus creating a greater demand for her labor, and in giving her a more thorough preparation for her work. This is not a work of legislation, but of individual enterprise. The wisest governments do not meddle with such things. The attempt even to shorten the day's work, without diminishing the pay in the same ratio, proves abortive.

The law of the market is that the work done and the pay must correspond, and by this law the pay will at length be distributed between men and women. Whenever it shall be established that women do the same work as men, they will receive the same pay. It is not enough that in a single occupation they can do as much. Their working power on the whole must be as great, in all the various occupations which bring wages; otherwise the demand will be greater for men, and the price greater. It is becoming established throughout the country that women succeed as teachers in the public schools as well as men, but in general they do not command the price of men. For lady teachers, the supply exceeds the demand; for men, the supply is below the demand. They cannot be secured by the woman's wages. If they can have only a woman's price for teaching, there is something better that they can do. Until woman's power equals that of man, in the entire range of employments that yield pay, her wages will be less. This condition can

never be realized. Man's physical force, which is one of the chief elements in money-earning, must always be superior. Hence on the whole he will have the wider range of occupation, and can hold himself higher in the market. This is a law of nature, and no human law can set it aside for an hour.

Whenever woman can offer the *product* of her labor in the market, instead of the labor itself, this disadvantage is not so apparent, and yet it is just as real; because there is a closer competition in the line of her labor. There are more to furnish the product she has to offer. A woman, offering a ready-made article of clothing in the city, will receive as much as a man for the same article; but the man, having a wider range, will not put his labor into that form. The man and the woman alike can make shirts, but the man can lay paving stones in addition. If shirts are cheap he will work at the pavement, but the woman must keep at the shirts. The higher the work performed, *i. e.*, the higher the powers employed, the less the competition. In the realm of genius, woman labors under no disadvantage in comparison with man, on the ground of competition. When Mrs. Stowe writes a story the market of the world is open to her. You can count on your fingers the men and the women that can compete with her. Legislation can no more reach such laws as these than it can the laws of the solar system. If it could be shown that the ballot would furnish woman with higher working force and a higher discipline of that force, then there would

appear some connection between wages and the vote; and this is one of the claims of the friends of this movement.

3. SUFFRAGE AND WOMAN'S ELEVATION.—It is claimed that the ballot will give to woman higher aims—will elevate her character and stimulate her to a higher culture, that she needs this as a help to her own development, that interest in the special issues of the ballot will draw her away from the trivial objects which occupy her thought, and give her objects more worthy of attention. Under this head it is common for the advocates of the proposed reform to depreciate the present character and employments of women, especially the young, to present them to us as given up to the frivolities of dress and flirtation, with no proper view of the responsibilities of life, and no earnest aim to meet its duties. It is maintained that the field of politics, into which the ballot will introduce woman, will present more elevated topics of thought, and a better work.

If this argument were not urged with such earnestness, I confess I should not think it called for any special attention. The great questions of society, social, moral and religious, claim and receive the attention of men and women alike. No great movement in any direction can be made without enlisting the interest and the support of women. The temperance and the anti-slavery reforms have enlisted the hearts and hands of women, and could never have prospered otherwise. The benevolent and religious operations of the day are carried for-

ward successfully by the co-operation of women. Not a church or Sabbath school, or a mission or a hospital, or any public or private charity, but is sustained by their presence, their labors and their prayers. No newspaper or magazine, religious or secular or literary, but enlists woman's talent and support. No political question, even, which touches the interests and the hearts of men, but engages the attention of women too, and receives the impulse of their sympathy and effort. It is not necessary to refer to their work in the war as an example. They bore their full share of the burden, and held up the banner of freedom when the hearts of men were failing them for fear. All these things are added to the regular and normal work of the home and of social life. They press upon the thoughts and the hearts of women their constant claims for attention and effort.

Is it possible that there are women in our country who find nothing to do? who are obliged from their own sense of vacuity to give themselves to personal adornment, and the frivolities of life? There may be some such; I fear there are; but will the ballot, put into such a useless hand, magnetize the dormant soul, and inspire it with any earnest life?

Significance of the Ballot.—This is expecting from the ballot a power that it does not possess. Those who have conjured with it know that there is no such magic in it. From a distance it may have a potent look, but in the grasp it is an insignificant slip of paper. You walk to the ballot box with an inward effort to realize the significance of

your movement. You cast your vote for the cause that you have borne for years on your heart, and lifted to God on your prayers. Before you turn away, an ignorant, frivolous boy drops his first vote upon yours and cancels the work from which you hoped so much. At the polls he is your equal in weight and power. At any other tribunal, erected by God or man, your opinion and influence would stand against an army of such weakness. If any one is in danger of being lifted up with a sense of his own importance, let him go to the polls and learn humility. It will prove to him a means of grace. He is merely a drop in the ocean of humanity. As for the inspiration of the transaction, the elevation of soul that it imparts, there is nothing in it. Yet we are told of men who come from distant parts of the world to cast a single vote. I do not question the propriety of their act. The decision of grave questions is at last, at the polls, determined by mere numbers and one must stand in his place and be counted. This is important, but of all the steps taken, and the work done in any great movement, this is the least important. All serious questions are settled before they reach the ballot—settled in the souls of men and women, and in the conflict of thought and feeling which brings the result. Every woman, as well as every man, counts for what she is worth. She has contributed her proper share to the decision of the question. Men will go and record that decision at the polls.

This is the significance of the vote. Even the

failure of the record will not finally reverse the decision. The settled public sentiment will govern the land. Take the history of any well established government like that of England, and it matters not which party comes into power, the government of the country is determined by the prevailing sentiment of the people. The Tories, out of power, vilify the Liberals in power, and threaten and promise great changes; but when they take the reins they drive at the same pace, and in the old beaten path; and the prince of Tories will even introduce a radical reform bill under the pressure of public feeling.

It is an American weakness to imagine that the ballot accomplishes the great movements of society, and that the secret springs of power lie in politics. This thought bewilders multitudes of unthinking men and women, and sometimes enters the minds of the most thoughtful. One of our anti-slavery poets, who is rarely superficial, magnifies the ballot as

> The weapon which comes down as still
> As snow flakes fall upon the sod,
> But executes the freeman's will
> As lightning does the will of God.

But lightning does not execute the will of God in any high sense. It may shiver a tree, or fire a building, or blast a life; but it never establishes the will of God in any human soul. A word of love, a breath of prayer, is mightier than the lightning to execute God's will. Every great work in the world is done first in human hearts; the ballot and legislation follow, to show that the work *is* done.

Now, is it reasonable to turn away from the heart-

work and life-work of men and women, and invoke the ballot, the feeblest of all these instrumentalities, to breathe a soul into these aimless and soulless forms? The effort will be vain. If women are frivolous, voting will not cure them.

UNJUST ESTIMATE OF WOMEN.—But I am compelled to think that injustice is done to the character of women in general, to point this argument in behalf of women's voting. It is a slander upon the women of the land to represent that they do not compare favorably with men in earnestness and elevation of character and of life. For every frivolous and vain girl you will find a fitting mate in some lightheaded youth, who dresses and smokes and smiles. It may be that fine dressing is the weakness of women, as cigars, potations, and politics are the weakness of men; but it would be difficult to prove that the woman's weakness is more degrading to the character or more mischievous to society. We could hardly afford to exchange the one for the other. Unless my own observation is at fault, the women throughout the land, both in city and country, compare favorably with the men in intelligence, in culture and in earnestness of life. It is not a rare thing to find that the women of any community or church constitute its chief strength. In the rural districts even, a careful observer will often be struck by the fact, that the society presents a group of young ladies, intelligent, cultivated and useful; and when he looks for the circle of young men to correspond, they do not appear. An election will bring out a bevy of young

voters, but their voting has not brought them up to the standard of character presented by their sisters. They do not seem to have thriven on the privilege of voting, nor the ladies to have suffered for the want of it. The young men will come slowly forward to respectability under the gentle influence of their sisters. This argument of giving the ballot to women assumes a comparative depression of character on their part which does not exist, and proposes a remedy for it which is utterly inadequate. Men and women are alike deficient in elevation of character and life, and all the great moral forces of the world will be required to lift them up. Voting is to be reckoned as one of the least of these forces—valuable where it is needed as a guaranty of rights, but feeble in itself.

4. Women Dissatisfied.—But we are told that there is a growing restlessness and dissatisfaction among women, which indicates a want which can be met only by the ballot and its natural sequences—a share in public offices and a place in legislative assemblies. This dissatisfaction, we are told, has been specially prominent since the war, which aroused men, and women, too, to new ideas and higher aspirations. Women can never be restored to the former condition of quiet and superficial contentment. The want of which they have become conscious must be satisfied.

Here again we have an assumed fact and a remedy proposed. As to the fact itself there is room for some inquiry. Much allowance must be made for a chronic restlessness in human beings generally.

Satisfaction is a rare attainment in this present world. There are few who do not find room for improvement in their character or their circumstances. An aspiration for something more or better, is the common impulse of mankind. More than this, there are few, whether men or women, who have realized their early dreams, the expectations of their youth. Life seldom seems to have yielded the rich harvest that was anticipated. It is often a comfort to find some reasonable explanation —a sufficient cause for this failure. What a relief to discover that our circumstances have been unpropitious, that some power above us has done the mischief!

Let a socialistic philosopher present his views before any ordinary assembly in this country, calling their attention to the fact that they are not as prosperous or happy as they might have been, that their early hopes of life have not been realized, and he would express the feeling of the great majority of his hearers. Let him then set forth that the laws of property have done them wrong, that the rich are their enemies and their oppressors, and that they can never attain their rights until the property claim is abolished and a re-distribution secured of the good things of the world, and the explanation will seem plausible to many, and will be accepted by numbers. We naturally desire to find an explanation of our short-comings outside of ourselves.

If the advocates of woman's suffrage find a prevalent dissatisfaction among women, it is scarcely

more than an ordinary human experience. If I should say that they are in part responsible for this dissatisfaction, the claim might be sustained. Many of the addresses which I have heard upon the subject have been adapted to produce the very restlessness and discontent complained of. The aimless and fruitless life of woman is set forth in exaggerated proportions—the disadvantages of her condition, and then the cause of all this wrong—the withholding of the ballot. It is not strange that women in mature life, who have thought themselves moderately useful and happy, and young women who have cherished cheerful views of their duties and their privileges, should go from such a lecture depressed in spirits, dissatisfied with themselves and with mankind generally, and almost ready to fret against Providence who appointed them a woman's destiny. I do not charge that this is the spirit or influence of all the advocates of this view, but it is a frequent exhibition; and it is by no means strange that such persons find a widespread dissatisfaction among women. In most cases this disturbance is superficial and temporary; in some cases it becomes chronic, and permanently sours the temper.

And then it is assumed that this uneasiness looks ward the ballot for relief,—that the suffrage will open to woman a work and an aim, which will fill her aspirations. For myself, I distrust the remedy. I do not find that voting fills the void in the hearts of men, and if it shall satisfy women, their dissatisfaction is not deep. When it shall be discovered,

as in the end it must be, that voting does not essentially change the relations of women to society, that woman's life and experience can be improved and elevated only by the slow processes by which society as a mass is lifted up, the dissatisfaction will return. A safer and surer remedy would be to give to woman a higher and deeper view of her personal life and duty, and of the interests that gather about her quiet path. How insignificant will prominence and notoriety appear, when with an angel's vision we retrace these paths. The humble duties of our daily life, the kindly services by which we help and bless each other, will be the light which shall gild these paths with glory. In a life of such service and duty, the human soul must find its satisfaction. Voting, or not voting, here alone we find content. Let us see to it that we do not by narrow and partial views create this dissatisfaction, and then propose an artificial remedy.

5. Independence for Woman.—Again, we are told that woman needs the ballot for her own enfranchisement and independence. From the very beginning of human society woman has been trampled on, or, to use the milder term of John Stuart Mill, *subjected*. Once in subjection, the whole constitution of society has been shaped to keep her there, and the result has been a dwarfed and blighted nature, such as we always find in a subject and oppressed class. Under such conditions it is useless to affirm what woman can do or cannot do. She has never been proved. We have only seen

what woman in subjection is; not what she would be, enfranchised and emancipated. The ballot is the prime condition on which her emancipation turns. She is humiliated by the very fact that the ballot is denied her; even though she did not need it for her own protection and help. It is a badge of inferiority.

This topic opens a wide field; only a few thoughts can be suggested. We have here again the assumption of woman's degradation and inferiority—a fact which I call in question once more. This inferiority is supposed to be evinced in the fact that in the various arts of life, the useful and the ornamental, and in works of genius, in music, painting, sculpture and poetry, woman's hand is not so conspicuous as man's. But this is asking too much. The life-work of man lies in these directions. To woman these are but a pastime, a recreation. Let her bring from her own peculiar domain the living souls which bear God's image, impressed with truth and goodness by her plastic power and her earnest work, and the lifeless forms on canvas and in marble must take a second place. The honest question is, has woman done her work as well as man has done his, and borne her fair share of the burdens of the world; and in the reaction of this work upon her character and life, does she show as good a result in fidelity and in all excellence? Tested by this standard, the only reasonable one, woman does not need to shrink from the comparison. Let us have done with this injustice to woman.

A PREVALENT FALLACY.—There is a fallacy again in regarding woman as an oppressed class, subject to all the conditions under which such a class exists, and in reasoning to her case from the results of long continued oppression upon a distinct and separate people. The African population of this and other lands have been oppressed for ages, and show the result in their character and condition. This same result, Mr. Mill reasons, we must expect in the case of woman. But what an oversight we have here! Women do not constitute a distinct and separate people, reproducing their like from generation to generation. Men and women are born of the same parents, wrought out of the same material, with a common inheritance in the ancestral stock. The electric impulses of the Anglo-Saxon race, as of every other race, firing the very blood, flow in the veins of women as of men, and from these living fountains men themselves draw again their vitality. All the sacred memories and associations of the heroic past find their home in her soul. She looks back upon no line of servile ancestors peculiar to women. She is the peer of kings in birth and blood, and the mere woman's form or condition cannot impart to her a slavish spirit.

We have no *race* of women. It is true that the traditional ideas of society in reference to woman's place and work may hamper and restrain her, but this is the end of a hereditary subjection on the part of women. Man must still say as in the Eden days, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of

my flesh." Men and women must always stand upon the same level, and rise and fall together. The assigned cause for the inferiority of woman disappears with the inferiority itself. They both exist only in imagination.

MAN'S POWER OVER WOMAN.—There is, however, an important truth in the direction of this argument, which we must not overlook. It is true that woman's *dependent* condition, a condition to which she has been subject from the beginning of the race, puts it in the *power* of man to oppress and degrade her, a power or opportunity which he has not been slow to use. When men are base, or vicious, or tyrannical, the burden of their baseness falls greatly on women. They often have the meanness to make the life of woman hard and almost hopeless. This fact does not apply merely to those forms of society where the degradation is universal, where every man as well as every woman is degraded, and the women seem to reach the lowest point in that degradation; it applies to every form of society and to every condition of life. Every vile man finds some woman to share, if not his vileness, at least his misery; and the vileness, where it exists, and the misery are more conspicuous in her case by the very conditions of her life. Her dependent condition puts her greatly in the power of man; and when he is a tyrant she is a sufferer, whether her home be a cottage or a palace. Every Henry the Eighth, or George the Fourth, is as sure to have his Catherine or his Caroline, a sufferer though a queen, as the drunken Irishman or the

American savage is to have his victim or his slave. Wherever there is a guilty or a wretched man, there is a wretched woman. The terms may be transposed with some propriety, but not with such absolute truthfulness. The general dependence of woman as a sex, and the personal dependence of woman as a wife, increase her liability. In entering the marriage relation, she stakes her life and hope upon the arrangement more entirely than the man does his. He may, possibly, escape a part of the calamity involved in a failure of the marriage; upon her it falls with its full force. And when we speak of marriage with reference to woman, we speak of what is essentially inseparable from her life.

Not that every woman will marry, or ought to marry; there will always be cases among women of successful life without marriage. Of the duty of marriage I have nothing to say. The general and perennial *fact* of marriage, as an ordinance of nature, is all that is involved in this discussion; and any scheme or plan of woman's life which does not contemplate this, may be deferred to the coming of that kingdom in which "they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

When we speak of the dependence of woman, we refer primarily to her condition and necessities as wife and mother. This condition places her well-being in the power of man, in a very important and pressing sense. We are not concerned with the question what women could or would do if they had a world to themselves. It may be admitted at once that they could do anything in the shape of work

which needs to be done. They would even be found adequate to the rough labor which now falls to men. It might even be granted that they would get on as comfortably—at least as decently, as a world of men. But men and women are in the world together, and are drawn and held together by laws and forces mightier than all human legislation—affections and wants on the part of woman, affections, wants and passions on the part of man. In all human society woman's condition will involve the relations, the liabilities and the necessities of wife and mother; and thus her condition becomes a dependent one. Dependence is a necessary and inevitable incident of wifehood and motherhood. In a low state of society this dependence amounts to subjection; in a higher civilization it is the dependence of a queen whom princes delight to honor. Thus woman in her condition and culture will be found at the top or the bottom of society—in barbarism the soil which is trampled on, which still nurtures the tree—in Christian civilization, its consummate flower and fruit. There is a corresponding dependence on the part of man—less obvious, but no less real—not for protection and support, but for refined society, for an object of his love, and for a home.

A Conflict with Nature.—When we talk of enfranchisement and independence for woman, we cannot mean freedom from the liabilities of her womanhood, nor from the power which is given to man, in the very nature and necessity of the case, over her well-being. We cannot even mean that she shall have the range of activity, and the freedom

of motion and of pursuit which belong to man. If this be the meaning we shall find that our conflict is with nature and with God, not with man nor society. Yet the leaders in this present movement seem at times to convey this idea. While in form honoring marriage, and expressing no expectation or wish to relieve woman from its conditions, they still hold out to her aims and plans inconsistent with these conditions. I once heard one of these ladies, herself an accomplished wife and mother, in an address before a promiscuous audience comprising a large number of young ladies, represent marriage and maternity as *one* of the callings open to women, while there were still others to which they might properly aspire. It is true that any individual woman may exercise her own free choice in the question of marriage; but marriage is to be contemplated as the normal condition both of men and women; and in marriage woman loses that freedom of movement, and choice of occupation which belongs to man. Her life-work comes to her by a higher law, and no human power can make it otherwise.

WOMEN IN THE PROFESSIONS.—There cannot be any enfranchisement or emancipation for woman, which will open to her the choice of a plan of life as this choice lies before men. She can choose to enter a profession if she will, or some calling which is to absorb her strength and life. In that choice there is involved the decision not to marry, and here, at the outset, her freedom is restricted. A young man decides upon his calling or profession,

and reinforces himself for it by marriage. He is not well equipped for his work until he has taken this step. The woman, when she marries, steps out of the chosen profession. It is this fact in *nature*, and not in human laws or customs, which restricts woman in her plan of life as compared with man. All the prejudices of society may be removed, all hindrances in the laws, if such there be, may be done away, all professional schools may be opened—this difficulty remains and must remain. Woman in choosing and pursuing the profession declines marriage. Exceptions may be named to this law, but they are so rare as merely to serve as reminders of the law.

Within the past twenty years many young women have passed through schools of medicine, and should now be physicians. Where are they? Unless my observation is at fault there are very few of them in the profession. To marry is to leave the profession, and they wisely marry. A leading seminary for ladies, in New England, has within a few years called three ladies, one after the other, to be physicians to the seminary. The position was a useful and an honorable one, such as any young lady entering the profession might aspire to. Within the seminary walls they were sheltered from all prejudice, and encircled by the mountains they seemed little exposed to the enticements of society; yet these all followed each other in accepting marriage and in leaving the profession. A fourth lady now occupies the responsible position.

The profession of teaching has been long open to

women, a most suitable and inviting one,—easily entered and providing for gradual advancement to higher positions of honor and of profit. The lower positions in this profession are occupied by ladies in large numbers; but how few are the veterans who have attained the honors of the profession! Not because they cannot succeed in this work, or because society places any impediment in the way; but because, to women, professional life is incompatible with marriage. Where is the ladies' school which does not lose its principal by marriage every few years? Yet these schools have often been organized by the enterprise of the principals themselves, and were shaped to meet their highest ambition for employment and for usefulness—aside from marriage.

This difficulty is not confined to the professions. It exists in the higher positions of every branch of business and of labor. Wherever such skill and power are required as can be accumulated only for a life work—from all such positions women are almost excluded. This fact reacts in a very depressing way upon women's wages. The fact, or the prospect, or the possibility of marriage, excludes them from these higher positions and from the wages which such positions afford. They are thrown back upon the lower and temporary places and these are overcrowded. Those who have the responsibility of appointing to the higher and more lucrative positions, cannot call a woman, because every woman is liable to marry, and, marrying, she is lost to the position. Ladies have been

appointed to professorships in colleges, but when fairly prepared to do good work they marry and take up the life-work assigned to woman by the constitution of nature.

These universal facts have their effect upon the thoughts and plans of women, even when they are not consciously recognized. Young women do not lay out their plans of life as young men do, and why should they? They cannot as readily enter upon the preparation for any profession or public calling, because the chance is very narrow that their life-work will lie in that direction. Let them decide with full purpose of heart upon their career, love and marriage will produce violent perturbations in their course. They can pursue with all necessary interest a course of general education, because this is necessary to their character and to the development of their personal power. It is what they need wherever their work may lie, but the choice of a profession, and a preparation for it they do not feel called to make.

This is natural and on the whole desirable. Marriage would be encumbered with difficulties if both parties had their plans of life, and one must yield to the other. There can be but one calling or profession in a family, and nature has guarded against any collision. There is some reason to think that the friends of the new movement aim and expect to set aside these facts, and to place woman upon a platform where she shall decide upon her work without reference to marriage. But woman's enfranchisement and independence can hardly be

found in that direction. Such independence as is consistent with marriage belongs to her, and this will be found in the elevation of her own character and life, and in the redemption of man from the baseness, the sensuality and the vice which makes him a tyrant and a burden, instead of a protector and a support.

WOMAN'S STRENGTH.—Woman's power to make man what she needs him to be, lies greatly in her dependence. There is no earthly motive to strengthen and restrain a weak and erring man so potent as the confiding dependence of a true and elevated woman. It is a part of the gospel of his salvation. The minister of religion is called to this solemn ceremonial of marriage. He is never called to the inauguration of a business copartnership, or to witness the transfer of property titles. But when a true woman, whose hope of life is staked upon the deed, puts her person and her honor and her well-being into the keeping of the man she deems worthy, the minister is in place. It has the solemnity of an act of religion. Ministering at this altar of cheerful sacrifice, I have often wondered at the trustful surrender. But God has thus ordained, and woman's security lies to some extent in the greatness of the confidence. If there is any manliness in man, any germ of a generous spirit in his bosom, if he is not already the slave of vice, he will respond to such an appeal as this.

Can the ballot in woman's hand, or human law hedging her around with its rough guards, add greatly to this security? Her highest interests lie

beyond the reach of these defenses. The law can only extend to her its protection when she brings back to it her abused confidence and her broken hopes. Woman cannot vote herself independent unless she can vote away her womanhood and the liabilities of her life. Such independence woman does not naturally desire. She may shrink from the mere legal relation of marriage, from the exhibition of its claims and liabilities in the cold light of logic, as she would shrink from the naked skeleton of the human form divine. But love and faith clothe this skeleton with fullness of beauty and breathe into it the breath of life. So the relation of the child to the parent, stripped of its love and its trust, and stated in terms of law, seems harsh and repulsive; but as we find it in human experience it is beautiful and beneficent.

The legal definitions of marriage may be changed —possibly improved, but its essential nature is unchangeable. Woman's dependence and man's reciprocal duty can never be ruled out. True manliness in men and true womanliness in women, is the only guaranty of womanly independence. Men will tyrannize over woman's ballot, as over the rest of her life and activity, until the meanness is eradicated; and it is a matter of wonder that some suspicious soul has not already suggested the possibility of this tyranny as the explanation of man's readiness to give her the ballot!

The claim that woman is degraded in the very fact that the ballot is withheld, and that she is thus classed with idiots and criminals, as unworthy or

unfit for the trust by her inferiority, sounds like a trick of rhetoric. The ballot has been withheld from woman because the work of government seemed incompatible with the womanly character and work. There has been an idea in the world that there was a natural division of labor between men and women—that the care of children, of the home, and of social life, was woman's natural prerogative, and that the rough out-door work of business, of war, and of government, belonged to men. This idea threatens to become antiquated, but society has been constructed in harmony with it. That woman is not called upon to vote is no more a mark of inferiority than that she is not called to the harvest-field or the battle-field. The fact that she is a woman is all that is indicated.

In some parts of the land the ballot has been at times withheld from ministers of the Gospel; yet in those same places and times ministers have been held in highest honor. The idea prevailed that a personal share in politics was not in harmony with their spiritual calling. If a woman chooses to feel dishonored by the arrangement, it is merely a matter of her own interpretation.

A Two-Edged Criticism.—But why not open the door and let those women vote who choose, and thus secure a wider liberty? If some do not choose to vote, this should not exclude from the polls those who believe they have a right there. The "Lorain Memorial," as it is called, has been criticised on this ground, because it seems like an effort on the part of women who do not wish to vote to exclude from

the privilege those who do. The criticism is just as available on the other side. A large portion of the women of the land believe that to extend the suffrage to women will lay upon them burdens which they ought not to undertake and will be detrimental to our social life. They understand, however, that if the privilege of voting is extended to women, the privilege becomes a duty. It is vain to say that those can vote who choose, and the rest can refrain. This is a pernicious doctrine to preach to voters. If women are admitted to the polls, the safety of the country, so far as voting can affect it, will lie in rallying to the ballot-box every intelligent and conscientious woman; and the women who do not wish to vote are as conscientious, not to say intelligent, as their progressive sisters. These women have at least the same right to ask to be relieved from the burden and the wrong that the others have to be admitted to the privilege. What right have the few who wish to share in politics to bind these burdens for the many who feel that they cannot bear them? As the law now stands, it protects the majority of women in their right *not* to vote, a right which they hold as precious and sacred.

For myself, I confess that I would much rather women would refrain from voting because they so choose, than because the law constrains them; but without the shelter of the law they could not have their choice. If the day should ever come when the majority of women wish to vote, the wish being distinctly cherished and clearly ascertained, for one

I would approve of removing the restraint; because I should regard the restlessness and dissatisfaction under the restraint a greater evil than the burden of voting, with its consequences. I should regard the result as a calamity, a turning back of the shadow on the dial of our civilization more than ten degrees; but with such a sentiment on the part of the great body of the women of the land, there would be nothing else to do.

6. Purifying Politics.—The arguments thus far considered, in favor of suffrage for women, bear upon the immediate result to themselves. There are other reasons, more weighty with many, bearing upon the good of the country and the general welfare. It is urged that woman's influence is needed in politics, as a purifying and elevating force—that the standard of character in political life is confessedly low, that dishonesty and corruption have invaded every department of the government, and that woman's presence and influence in legislation, and in the administration of public affairs, would prove a correction. It is claimed that this will purify the "dirty pool" of politics and bring forth from it pure and healing streams. No positive examples are presented to sustain this view, but the general refining and elevating influence of woman is relied on, as shown in social life, and especially in schools where the two sexes are trained together. It is not claimed that women alone would do materially better than men, but that the natural order is to unite the two in every department of human

effort,—a view which is sustained in the Scripture —"It is not good for man to be alone."

On this point there is room for the exercise of judgment, and until the question has been settled by experience, there will be different opinions. There can be no question that woman's influence is needed in our government; and if we ever rise to any high position of dignity or honor in our national affairs, half of the credit for the attainment will be due to woman. The only question is, in what form will woman's influence be most wholesome and effective? Sometimes it is best exerted directly, sometimes indirectly. There was a time when no woman was introduced upon the stage in the English theater. These are sometimes called the palmy days of the English drama. For the last two hundred years all this has been changed, and actresses are now greatly relied on in every form of theatrical representation. No one will claim that the morals of the stage have been improved, or deny that that which makes these representations at the present day to so great an extent an offense and a disgrace to our civilization, is the immodesty of the women that appear in them. Two circumstances have probably combined to produce this result: *first*, the women whom the stage attracts are not likely to be the best and most discreet of their sex, and *secondly*, the associations of men and women in theatrical combinations are not the safest and most elevating. Is there not reason to apprehend both these difficulties in the introduction of women into political life? We have

many excellent men in the public service, in all its branches, good and honorable men; but it is not unfair to say that these public positions attract many of less worthy character and of doubtful honor. The best men are disinclined to engage in the struggle for office, and the less worthy have the advantage in the struggle. It is probably true that, in the common judgment of the country, there is a presumption against the high character of a successful politician. At all events, we have many men of unworthy character in public life.

The same tendency will exist in the case of women, and in a much higher degree. Women of the highest character and discretion will be reluctant to leave their homes, and the work that is most to their mind, and break over the lines which have hitherto circumscribed their action. Conscientious views and a high sense of duty will call out a few, but personal ambition, or a love of notoriety, or other selfish views, will operate with most of those who enter active political life. The women of the country will be less fairly represented by their politicians than the men by theirs. Many forward, unprincipled and reckless women will struggle into political life. Is it reasonable to expect from them a purifying and wholesome influence in these public positions? Then, too, are the associations of these men and women, in late sessions, in midnight caucuses, in committee rooms and at the hotels, likely to prove refining and elevating? I cannot dwell upon this subject, I only suggest it. To

thoughtful people there is ground for apprehension here.

A new force will be introduced into politics, or at least will be given wider scope; and that is woman's personal fascinations. It is too much to hope that this force will not be used. The history of European courts shows what is possible in this direction. Sinister rumors of such influences about our own government, within the past few years, have given occasion of apprehension at home. A late number of the *Woman's Journal* contains a letter from Mr. Maurice, of England, in which he advocates suffrage for women on the ground that their irresponsible and irregular action in politics is proving pernicious, and that the true remedy is to give them responsibility. The remedy does not seem adequate. The political woman of average character will avail herself of such influence as she can command. The irresponsible and irregular influence will scarcely be set aside by the responsibility of voting.

MISTAKEN ASSUMPTIONS.—These are some of the results to be apprehended from the proposed change in its influence upon those in public life, and it is a matter of grave consequence; but the question of the influence upon the great mass of the people is more important. It is hoped by the advocates of the change that political asperities will be toned down, that partisan feeling will be abated, that right reason and mutual respect will prevail among the people, and that order and decorum will take the place of confusion and violence at the polls. By the present arrangement the influence of women

is most wholesome in tempering political excitements and animosity. These excitements are in a measure superficial, or out-of-doors. The man abroad finds himself in the whirl of party-feeling; at home he is sheltered from the excitement, and finds time to review the matter, and take a more deliberate attitude. His perturbed feelings are calmed, and he is better prepared to maintain his self-possession in a future encounter. He meets his political opponent in social life where the influence of woman is predominant, and where political differences are ruled out. In this more quiet atmosphere men have to respect each other and to be more tolerant of each other's views. It is a great relief that domestic and social life are so little pervaded by political influences. But when women become voters, these conditions will be changed. The political excitement will reach the social circle and fireside, and permeate our entire life.

Here it may be claimed that in the presence of women, and by her influence, the interest in politics will become of a less intense and more elevated character,—that it will become so moderate and reasonable, that domestic and social life will not be disturbed by it. I see little to hope in this direction. Women will enter into politics as into other things, with their sympathies and feelings; and will contribute their impulse to the excitement instead of allaying it. This result is realized in cases of neighborhood excitements in general, and with the proposed change political differences seem likely to grow into social and neighborhood con-

flicts. We witness this fact, whenever any political question comes to pervade a community, and enlist the interest and the feelings of women. They are by no means the coolest and most deliberate sharers in the contest. During the war of the rebellion the women of the South furnished more than half of the heat and the bitterness of the conflict, as at the North they furnished a full half of the patriotic enthusiasm and devotion which brought the triumph. In great emergencies we need this impulse of inspiration, but in ordinary political contests we cannot afford to have society moved to its depths.

An acknowledged defect in American character and life is its nervous, restless intensity, an absence of the quiet and repose which adorn the character and make life wholesome. Out of this intensity of thought and feeling, spring social convulsions and personal crime. The intensity generated in the war has given us such a harvest of crime as we cannot afford to gather once in a century. We need quiet and rest—time to come to ourselves and see where we stand; but with the proposed change consummated we are to have no rest,—certainly not for a generation to come.

Domestic Differences.—The danger sometimes apprehended of domestic quarrels does not seem imminent. Husband and wife, as in other matters, will commonly agree on political questions—at least agree to tolerate each other's differences. Yet it can scarcely be doubted that the arrangement will multiply occasions of difference, and some of these will be especially trying. A difference confined to

themselves, not imparted to neighbors, is easily disposed of; but political differences will inevitably be published. Canvassers visiting every house as now, will bring out the relative attitude of husband and wife, and no sense of delicacy will be allowed to screen the difference. Husband and wife will go together to the polls, as they go to church. The situation will be trying to two classes of women, those who are jealous of themselves lest they should be carried away by the opinions of their husbands, and not give the opposing view due weight, and those to whom the tameness and monotony of voting always with their husbands will seem repulsive, and who would like to cast an opposing vote, as more piquant and sensational. These peculiarities of personal character will become a matter of public observation and criticism, and add to the general discomforts and annoyances of politics. It is easy to say that such apprehensions are mere fancies, and should never stand in the way of a great reform. I answer, the promised advantages are fancies too, and are fairly balanced by opposing fancies.

On the whole, the prospect of a higher style of politics in public places and in private life, as resulting from the change, does not look encouraging. May it not be quite as safe to depend on the general elevating influence of woman in society, the influence of her character and her life, which emanates from the quiet of home and the social circle? To that influence is greatly due whatever of honor and truth men in public places exhibit. They do not escape this influence by going into public life with-

out the immediate presence of women. It is one of the great forces which shape their character and govern their action. The vote in woman's hand would hardly add to the power.

7. IMPROVED LEGISLATION.—There is another field in which much is expected from the votes of women. In the great moral questions of society, the suppression of intemperance, gambling and the social vice, they have a direct personal interest. They are not as deeply involved in the guilt of these vices as men, yet they are the greater sufferers. Women can be trusted to cast their votes against these evils, and to secure such legislation as will exterminate them. Many women wish to vote, in the hope of doing something effective in this direction. It seems a shame that society should have no power to relieve itself of these burdens and offenses; and the difficulty is that women have not been called to the rescue.

This view is very plausible and promising, and if sound would almost of itself decide the question. If the vote of women would drive these abominations from the land, we could scarcely pause to speculate on other possible results. But there are some grounds for doubt. In the first place the view attributes too much power to law. Woman's vote might give us stronger temperance laws, prohibitory instead of restrictive laws, and imprisonment instead of paltry fines. But is it by any means clear that stronger laws are what we need? Is it even certain that they would not prove a hindrance? Capital punishment or imprisonment for

life for making, vending, or using intoxicating drinks, would be a strong law, but it could not be executed in any earthly community. The public sentiment would not support it, and it would be utterly inoperative—essentially no law. The truth is that the temperance laws in many of our States are already in advance of the public sentiment. They are not executed. In the State of Ohio we have laws which, well sustained, and vigilantly executed, would close every dram shop in the State; but in all our cities and larger towns there is essentially free trade in liquors. A law is strong when there is a strong public sentiment behind it, not when it uses strong words. The strength which our laws lack is an intense moral conviction and determination on the part of the people. With this, our legislation will be effective; without it, feeble, however strong in form. The vote of women will add one kind of strength to the law, not so clearly the other. It will not add to the light or the conviction on the subject of intemperance. In this direction we have the full effect of woman's power at present, and it is by that power that we are able to do so much in the suppression of intemperance. Give us more temperance in the community, at home, and in private life, a higher moral tone, reverence for God and respect for man, and there will be no difficulty about temperance laws. We shall always have as strong laws on this subject as can be executed. Women have a work to do in this matter which is more pressing than that of voting, and less easy to do. The customs of social life are

in their keeping. It is for them to say whether the cup shall be pressed to their neighbor's lips.

The discovery may prove discouraging, but sooner or later we have to learn that human weakness and passion cannot be legislated out of the world, or human strength and virtue legislated in. The law can here and there restrain the outrages of vice, but it is impotent to infuse and foster the principles of virtue in the hearts of men. We must fall back upon the slower but surer work of elevating the moral character of men by the force of truth and religion. Here there is abundant opportunity both for women and for men, and reliance upon any other scheme must prove a disappointment.

Again, it is assumed that woman's vote will of course be cast on the right side in these moral questions. We judge this from the fact that the convictions, interests and sympathies of women are on that side. But is there not reason to apprehend that when women become involved in politics they will be exposed to the same diverting influences which are effective with men? They will be drawn into party organizations as men are. They will have points to make like other politicians, and temperance and other good causes will be deferred to a more convenient season. Already there are rumors that the leaders of the movement are in a waiting attitude towards the great party in the country that has shown no zeal for temperance and kindred reforms. If that party shall adopt woman's suffrage, these leaders will affiliate with them. The

prospect of any temperance movement in such a connection is very remote; and this is but an illustration of the manner in which political considerations must operate.

The argument rests upon the assumption that women are more in earnest than men in these moral reforms, and will continue so when invested with political responsibility. Are we to understand that women are more virtuous than men—more established in righteousness? What becomes, then, of the argument that women are degraded by their exclusion from the polls, and that they need the ballot to lift them up to a more serious and earnest life? If women are superior to men in these respects, is it not possible that their seclusion from public and political life has saved them from these temptations? The probability is that men and women are very much alike, and that if the votes of women were added to those of men, the moral balance would stand essentially as it does at present; and that when women are exposed to the same besetments as men they will show similar weakness.

If I have correctly followed the progress of public discussion on this subject, these are the strong arguments relied on in behalf of woman's suffrage; and if I have rightly considered and weighed these arguments, they do not establish the fact that the ballot in woman's hand would further either her own interests or the interests of society in general. Woman, then, has no need of the ballot and no right to it.

But it might be justly said if there is no harm in

the arrangement, then she should have the ballot as a matter of courtesy, or rather be left to take it or not as she pleases. No one could deny this, or would be disposed to do so. Some of the evils and difficulties to be apprehended I have already given. There are others of which I shall attempt only a very general statement.

1. The claim seems to be based upon a false idea of society. It involves an *individualism* which is extreme, and which must prove detrimental to our social institutions. The great element in the structure of society is the family. Whatever contributes to its establishment and success, is promotive of general and individual welfare, and whatever undermines this, will in the end bring down the fabric even of the state. Any government, whatever its form, which fosters the family, and gives it its proper place, will not prove a failure, and any form which tends to disintegrate the family cannot prove a success. The family is the natural unit in general society. The husband and father is the natural representative of the household to look after its interests in the community, to express its sentiments and wants, and to respond to the claims of the government upon it. If an individual of that family makes an assault upon the community by crime, then the law recognizes the individual and lays its hand upon the offender. Otherwise the law has to do only with the family representative. All domestic interests are provided for by household arrangement and legislation. This is essentially the theory of society the world over.

The family is treated with through the head of the house.

The new theory of woman's suffrage changes all this, ignores the family unity, and calls upon men and women as individuals to stand up and answer for themselves. It proposes to bring men and women together in a sort of business co-partnership instead of the family unity of marriage, and when brought together the woman has her separate interests and callings and duties, and the man has his. She must go to the polls when election comes, and to public service when the appointment comes, when a jury is impanneled or the legislature convened. The tendency of all this must be to weaken family ties, and to give undue prominence to the interests and ambitions of the individual. In the present constitution of society the man speaks for the family; he works for the family, votes for the family, pays taxes for the family, serves the government for the family, in war and in the civil service. According to the new idea, the man speaks for himself, and the woman for herself, and the children may be forgotten between them. It can hardly be doubted that we thus introduce a centrifugal force which family ties will not always be able to withstand. It is claimed that we may trust nature to maintain her own claims, to hold each in the proper place—husband, wife and child—that a wife is not to be drawn away from her home duties by these calls of a separate occupation and public service. Undoubtedly nature is stronger than human institutions, and the wife will not often neglect her

home, nor the mother her child. But nature needs help instead of hindrance; and the proposed arrangement cuts across these natural ties. Let a woman be absent weeks on a jury, or months in the legislature or in congress, and the home will lose its power on husband and wife and child. Public life becomes attractive to numbers of women, and home duties become tame. The advocates of the new system intend no such results, but something of this result is sure to come. The family organization can not stand the strain of such intense individualism. Have we not already some foreshadowings of the result in the statistics of divorce which different parts of the country furnish? A careful comparison of these will show that the number of divorces is greatly in excess in the New England States, and in those parts of the country occupied by the New England emigration. In Ohio, according to the latest published statistics, the number of divorces in the counties of the "Western Reserve" is about twice as great in proportion to the number of marriages, as in the State as a whole, and the greatest proportion is found where there are no large cities, and where the population is most purely of New England origin. These facts need to be pondered; for in those very parts of the country general education has made most progress and the highest individual culture has been attained; nor can it be supposed that these communities are behind the rest of the country in general morality and social order. But in no other region has the sense of personal independence and of individ-

ual rights been so much cultivated. Annoyances in domestic life which would be tolerated elsewhere, are not tolerated here, and the marriage tie yields to the impulse of the individual. This is the most natural and probable explanation of the facts. The individualism has often taken on the form of loose views in regard to marriage; and the theories of Spiritualism and Communism have done their part; but these are all but concrete forms of our intense individualism. I am aware that many regard this frequency of divorce as evidence of progress in civilization; and it undoubtedly is proof of higher intelligence and independence on the part of women. But it is also proof that our personal and domestic morality has not kept pace with the sense of independence. The higher virtues of purity and patience and forbearance, and the humbler domestic affections are overborne by this restless and impulsive individualism. We need now to rest awhile in the individual struggle, and bring up what is behind. We are already under too high a pressure. The centrifugal forces threaten to disrupt society. Men must become purer, more manly and magnanimous, and women more patient, and considerate and self forgetful before we can endure greater strain. The present woman movement applies itself with all its force at the very weakest point in our civilization. It proposes to intensify the individual tendency in the very direction of our dangers. It is one of the most radical theories and forms of individualism ever offered to mankind. It can not be that we need it; it is doubtful whether

we can endure it. Let us cultivate for a generation the private and domestic virtues, and leave these individualizing, disintegrating forces to be applied, if necessary, at some future day.

It may be urged that I have overlooked the fact that large numbers of women have a single, individual life to lead, and that this personal independence is the very strength they need to fit them for their conflicts. I answer, if there is any antagonism between the interests of solitary women and those of the family, then the family must be sustained. We can not afford to introduce any disorganizing force into society to meet the special wants of single women. But there is no such conflict. Women who stand alone in life, and widows with children, will find themselves most safe, and best provided with suitable employment and support, in communities where the family is held in highest honor, and is most successfully maintained. This could be abundantly shown, but it needs no proof.

2. Another false idea involved in this movement is the view which it presents of the aims of life and means of realizing them. The underlying philosophy of the movement is essentially materialistic. The great thing held up to woman's ambition is personal advancement in the outward conditions of life, public position, public influence and ability to earn money. The ideal of womanly character which is constantly pressed upon us, in public addresses upon these subjects; and in the periodicals which support the cause, is that of rough independence, and outward aggressive force—rude material

strength, rather than inward spiritual power. The constant pressure is to do something great, rather than to be something worthy and true. The things to be done, too, are those which pertain to the outward life, and affect the material condition of men. Read the weekly column in the *Woman's Journal*, entitled, "What Women are Doing," and you will find that the great field of woman's labor is overlooked, her fidelity at home, her quiet, self-denying life, where the truly great things are wrought; and our attention is directed to exploits, to unusual or unexampled achievements in some department of out-door labor or business, or in public office. Every instance in which some woman has been appointed to a clerkship, or a post-office, or has undertaken the work of a broker or banker, or a young girl has assumed the duties of ticket agent or telegraph operator, is set forth with manifest approval and satisfaction. The implication is that in these directions woman's true life is to be found, and that in these achievements lies the great good of society. So earnest is the endeavor to crowd women out into such positions, that what we have been wont to consider as the settled proprieties of life are set aside, and women are thrust into the work and society of men in unusual relations, without the common safeguards of decency and delicacy. In Wyoming, women are closeted upon a jury with men. Throughout the country, girls are introduced into counting-rooms and offices with strange men without the presence of father or brother. Have all our old ideas of propriety and delicacy been

proved false, and is all our natural feeling upon such matters fastidiousness or prudery? But the point is that there is such eagerness to open all these doors to women that the higher proprieties and sentiments will be trampled on to accomplish it, a proof that the leading thought is rude force, rather than high character.

Now, is not this element precisely the thing which we do not need? Is this to supply the present great want in American life? Have we not sufficient personal ambition, and greediness for money and place, and outward power, that it must be intensified by changing the whole current of woman's life, and bringing in a tide of worldliness upon the quiet and sanctity of our homes? The promise sounds like that made to the woman of old: "In the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

> "Some flowers of Eden we still may inherit,
> But the trail of the serpent is over them all."

The great want of our time is not more of outward activity, but more of restful and elevating thoughtfulness. We are not suffering in modern society for more of the money-making power, on the part either of men or women, but for that higher grace of using these gifts of God as not abusing them. If the money-making power could be doubled to-day, it would be a doubtful blessing. We need an accession to the higher qualities of character, and to the profounder conditions of a noble civilization, before we can endure such increase of outward material advantages. The

great danger with which we stand face to face this very hour, is the intense passion for wealth, and the overruling power of money in the land. Even the wretched poor in the cities are suffering more for an addition to their virtues, temperance, frugality and industry, than for outward advantages and opportunities. Are we so in want, that we must press the women of the land into the work of money-making? We cannot spare them for this service. It is the least of our wants. We might better set all our ministers, teachers and missionaries at this work, if the case is so pressing, and spare the great body of the women of the land to the higher duties and the higher culture, a work for which there is little pay, because it is above all price.

For these reasons, and many others like them, I am constrained to think that the change proposed is not a true reform—that a step in this direction is not a step forward. The time, too, for such an experiment, if we could consider it an experiment, is not propitious. The social conflicts in this country, for the coming generation, will be sufficient to absorb all the moral force that can be brought to bear. We cannot afford to expend any of this force upon doubtful movements. Let us be reasonably sure of our way before we acquire such momentum in it that we cannot pause. More than all, let us seek the "meekness of wisdom," that "wisdom which is from above," which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

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